

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TANANA 00731 190731Z

14-11

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7182

INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USUN NEW YORK 0221

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

COMIDEASTFOR

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DEPT PASS DIA

CINCLANT AND CINCUSNAVEUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINR, MA

SUBJECT: COLONEL RABETAFIKA BEFORE MILITARY TRIBUNAL

REF: TANANARIVE 0577

1. FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF GOVERNMENT, COLONEL ROLAND RABETAFIKA, APPEARED BEFORE MILITARY TRIBUNAL APR 16 TO ANSWER CHARGES OF HIS COMPLICITY IN ASSASSINATION OF FORMER HEAD OF STATE RICHARD RATSIMANDRAVA. SUSPICION WAS CAST UPON RABETAFIKA BY HIS EARLY ARRIVAL AT SCENE OF ASSASSINATION FEB 11 PLUS TESTIMONY OF ANOTHER ACCUSED CONSPIRATOR, CHRISTIAN BORA, WHO SUGGESTED THAT "CLUB OF 48" (LEADING MERINA FAMILIES)

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PAGE 02 TANANA 00731 190731Z

HEADED BY RABETAFIKA SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN CONSPIRACY

AGAINST RATSIMANDRAVA. MOST DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENT OF ALL WAS ALLEGATION BY MALAGASY LANGUAGE PAPER THAT PROOF OF RABETAFIKA THREAT ON LIFE OF RATSIMANDRAVA EXISTED. REPORTER TESTIFIED THAT HE HAD BEEN WITNESS TO THREAT WHILE HIDING UNDER RATSIMANDRAVA'S DESK. TAPE RECORDING OF RABETAFIKA THREAT ALSO MADE, REPORTER SAID, BUT NOT CLEAR FROM OTHER TESTIMONY WHETHER TAPE, IN FACT, EXISTS.

2. RABETAFIKA EXPLAINED HIS PRESENCE AT ASSASSINATION SCENE AS SIMPLY BEING COINCIDENTAL BECAUSE HE WAS ON WAY HOME WHICH LOCATED NEAR RATSIMANDRAVA'S, DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF OR INVOLVEMENT WITH, "CLUB OF 48," AND DENIED THREAT ON RATSIMANDRAVA, STATING HE HAD NOT EVEN MET WITH LATTER ON DATE CITED BY ALLEGED WITNESS. (MALAGASY RADIO REPORT SAID COMMENTS BY MRS. RATSIMANDRAVA SUPPORTED RABETAFIKA'S FRIENDSHIP WITH RATSIMANDRAVA.)

3. RABETAFIKA TESTIFIED WITH EMOTION SAYING HE WAS VICTIM OF CAMPAIGN TO STAIN HIS HONOR AND THAT OF MALAGASY ARMY.

4. EMBASSY COMMENT: EMBASSY CONSIDERS IT HIGHLY DOUBTFUL THAT, HAD RABETAFIKA BEEN INVOLVED IN ASSASSINATION PLOT, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF FIRST ON SCENE. THIS VIEW PROBABLY SHARED BY MOST MALAGASY OBSERVERS AS WELL. CONSISTENT WITH RABETAFIKA'S FORMER POLITICAL PROMINENCE AND PROMISE, MALAGASY MEDIA GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO RABETAFIKA'S TESTIMONY.
MENDENHALL

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